



Press Release – For Immediate Release

To: Assignment Editor/Editor of Education and Local News Sections

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HSUHK study reveals inadequate support for youth micro-entrepreneurs with non-tech sectors hardest hit

A latest study by The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) has found that youth micro-entrepreneurs generally face inadequate funding and support, with the problem being particularly acute in non-technology sectors such as retail, food and beverage, creative industries, freelancing, and professional services. The research team urges the Government to develop a more inclusive, entrepreneurial ecosystem-oriented, stage-specific policy framework for youth entrepreneurship that can respond more precisely to entrepreneurs' needs at different stages of development.

The study, titled "A Multifaceted Analysis of Strengthening Stage-Specific Support System for Youth Micro-Entrepreneurship in Hong Kong," is funded by the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme of the HKSAR Government (Project No. 2024.B12.009.24D, project in progress). Commencing in March 2025 and spanning one year and three months, the project began with a comparative policy analysis drawing on the experiences of London and Beijing. The analysis concluded that Hong Kong should strengthen policy integration and implementation while providing support for young entrepreneurs in both the technology and non-technology sectors that better reflect their practical needs. The research team then adopted a mixed-methods approach, conducted in-depth interviews with 25 youth micro-entrepreneurs and 20 support providers, as well as collected 627 online questionnaire responses from youth micro-entrepreneurs. By combining statistical findings with qualitative data, the study examined the experiences of young entrepreneurs.

Micro-entrepreneurship refers to a business model with small capital investment and a small number of employees. The study showed that youth entrepreneurship generally goes through stages such as existence, survival, success, take-off, and maturity, with each stage involving distinct needs and challenges. Funding shortages were recognised as a consistent issue across all stages of the entrepreneurial journey. Nearly 70% of respondents identified insufficient funding as the main challenge at the existence stage; the proportion was 54.1% among those in the survival or success stage, and 45% among those in the take-off or maturity stage.

The study further highlighted a clear resource gap for non-tech sectors in Hong Kong's entrepreneurship support landscape. Respondents generally believed that existing entrepreneurship policies and support programmes place excessive emphasis on artificial intelligence, deep tech, innovation-labelled, and rapidly scalable startups, leaving youth micro-enterprises in retail, food and beverage, creative industries, and service sectors easily overlooked. Close to 10% of respondents believed that existing support policies were sufficient to meet their needs. Over 80% hoped for low-threshold and easily accessible funding subsidies; 44.3% wanted



simpler application procedures for funding schemes; 43.9% hoped for greater marketing support; and 37.3% expected access to mentors or advisory services.

Many respondents believed that informal support—such as startup funding, emotional support, practical help, and operational advice provided by family members, friends, peers, and partners—was more accessible than formal support, which includes assistance provided through government, NGOs, universities, business-sponsored schemes, innovation competitions, courses, and angel investment. More than 46% of respondents mainly relied on informal support, while only about 18.2% mainly relied on formal support. Close to 95% used personal savings as startup capital, and 62.7% had received financial support from family members.

Although respondents generally believed that the Greater Bay Area (GBA) offers a larger market, more complete industrial chains, and more business-matching opportunities, their willingness to expand there remained clearly low. 66.2% were uncertain about whether they would enter the GBA market, 22.5% did not plan to do so, and only 11.3% either planned to enter or had successfully expanded into the market. The main barriers identified were, in descending order: cost pressure (57.9%), insufficient market knowledge (56.5%), regulatory differences (48.3%), lack of local networks (44.0%), and language or cultural barriers (35.3%).

The study also found that 57.4% of respondents experienced linear or stable business growth, while around 40% were in non-linear development trajectories characterised by fluctuation, interruption, or instability. Many respondents held broader definitions of success, including maintaining stable income, flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, and sustaining an independent livelihood. The survey results reflect this diversity of orientation: 39% prioritised business expansion, nearly 30% valued stable income, 20.8% prioritised work-life balance, and 7.5% emphasised the social impact of their business.

Dr Victor Chan Chi-ming, Principal Investigator of the project and Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Science at HSUHK, said, “Youth micro-entrepreneurs are highly important to Hong Kong’s economy. They promote innovation, create employment opportunities, and enhance young people’s self-reliance and social mobility.”

He noted that, in response to the challenges faced by young people at different stages of entrepreneurship, the research team recommends that the Government:

- (1) develop a stage-specific support framework, including support measures tailored to different development stages and a one-stop platform offering flexible support;
- (2) better coordinate formal and informal support, including the integration of advisors, dedicated officers, and peer support, as well as allocating resources to community and family workshops;
- (3) close support gaps in non-tech sectors, including the provision of dedicated non-tech funding, incubation, marketing, legal, and operational support, and revising assessment criteria so that they are no longer confined to technology-oriented growth indicators;
- (4) adopt a broader definition of entrepreneurial success in policy and support programmes, placing value on business survival, autonomy, resilience, work-life balance, and social contribution;



- (5) reform entrepreneurship education, by strengthening entrepreneurship education in secondary and higher education to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset early on; and
- (6) strengthen collaboration among governments across GBA cities to create more practical development pathways, including city-specific operational guidelines, compliance support, and trusted network-matching services.

Click [here](#) for the PowerPoint presented at the press briefing.

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Photos:



Photo 1: HSUHK research shows that youth micro-entrepreneurship generally face inadequate support measures and ecosystem support, particularly in non-tech sectors. Photo of the research team, including (right) Dr Victor Chan Chi-ming, Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Science; and Dr Eva Hung Po-wah, Associate Professor in the Department of Social Science.



Photo 2: Dr Victor Chan urges the Government to develop a more inclusive, entrepreneurial ecosystem-oriented, stage-specific policy framework for youth entrepreneurship.

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香港恒生大學
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About The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) is a non-profit private liberal-arts-oriented university with six Schools (Business, Communication, Decision Sciences, Humanities and Social Science, Translation and Foreign Languages, and Transdisciplinary Studies), and over 7,000 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students. With its unique “Liberal + Professional” education model, HSUHK nurtures young talent with critical thinking, innovative minds, caring attitudes, moral values and social responsibility.

Aspiring to be a leading private university in the region, HSUHK prioritises stellar undergraduate education, top-quality faculty members, award-winning green campus facilities, innovative degree programmes, a unique residential college system that combines living and learning, interactive small-class teaching, close student-teacher relationships, impactful research, and excellent student development and support services.

HSUHK has earned various international recognitions. In the AppliedHE’s ALL ASIA Private University Ranking 2026, it secured 7th place in China. HSUHK ranked 22nd in Social Sciences and Humanities and 23rd in both Business and Management and Economics and Finance among China’s top universities in the Research.com Top Universities and Top Scientists Rankings 2026. The MSc in Global Supply Chain Management programme achieved 84th place globally in the QS International Trade Rankings 2025. Additionally, HSUHK’s School of Business obtained AACSB International accreditation in 2023, a mark of excellence held by only 6% of the world’s leading business schools. HSUHK was also ranked among the top 200 worldwide on “Quality Education” and “Decent Work and Economic Growth” in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings 2021.